

Quality is a feature that is mentioned frequently in the SER and underpins the strategic objectives of the university. It is stated that "UMF will sustain these objectives by permanent review, adaptation and modernisation of its services and processes with a clear and unabated focus on quality and excellence". The strategic plan 2012 - 2015, quality manual and other documents present a good platform in continuing the move towards quality assurance.

In doing this a number of significant measures have been taken, most significantly the introduction of Quality Management System (QMS) at the university level. A system wide Quality Management System (QMS) has been designed, documented and implemented at the UMF, according to the SR EN ISO 9001:2008, and certified. The experience of the team is that whilst it has a number of benefits, ISO has a tendency to focus on processes rather than people, improvement and culture change.

Regarding existing programmes, the SER advises that there is a constant focus on quality enhancement of educational processes with the purpose of meeting European and international benchmarks. These benchmarks were neither explicit to the team nor evident in a number of meetings with staff. Whilst the European Standards and Guidelines were mentioned, awareness of these was inconsistent, even amongst groups tasked with monitoring quality. Benchmarks should be made explicit and communicated to all members of staff together with an exploration of their role in meeting them. Monitoring of the quality follow-up procedures has to be improved at all phases of the process.

The issue of quality is also related to the development of international programmes and curricula. The university sees a strategic advantage arising from increased global demand for education. There is an inference, within the SER, that their advantage is related to cost and quality, stating that higher education costs are more in developed countries as is the quality of provision. The task for UMF therefore is to achieve comparable levels of quality whilst maintaining lower and therefore competitive pricing. For this reason and the issue raised above regarding the perception of Romanian medical students, effective quality systems are imperative to safeguard and promote reputation.

UMF has introduced what it describes as important instruments for quality assurance procedures. In addition to the above, a new curriculum bureau has been founded with the purpose of quality enhancement in the educational processes. Its purpose is to coordinate curricular development in the context of transnational and multi-regional coherence by a permanent adaptation of the curricula to the requirements of the labour market, via quantifiable quality standards implemented according to the European and international education system.

Further internal quality arrangements are in place via the Evaluation and Academic Quality Assurance Commission (EAQAC/CEEAA), which elaborates the annual report of internal evaluation regarding the quality of education in UMF Iasi. The report is then analysed by the university senate and embodies the synthesis of the results from the internal self-evaluation regarding the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the quality of the educational process (structured by educational programmes, departments, colleges, research).

The external evaluation of the quality of education is made by the Romanian Agency of Quality Assurance for Higher Education (ARACIS), which in 2010 accredited UMF Iasi with the qualification "High Level of Confidence". According to the European Evaluation Guides for the quality of education in the medical field, there are three categories: basic medical education (for medical graduation programmes); post-graduate medical education (for residency and PhD studies) and continuous medical education.

The university has identified areas within its quality system which could be strengthened and these include complex activity (time, human resources, legislation); positive results require a systematic effort; difficulty understanding "quality management language" by employees; increased paper use; lack of motivation for staff involved in quality mechanisms systems (QMS) activities; lack of adequate IT infrastructure to support the QMS; lack of students' motivation to evaluate teachers; lack of workplace satisfaction surveys for academic and

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administrative staff; lack of employer satisfaction survey for university alumni.

The team acknowledge the reflection on quality issues and notes that much activity is directed towards meeting the goals of external quality systems and to this end the emphasis of the quality system is on systems and procedures rather than embedding the need for quality in the daily actions of staff. This approach detracts rather than enhances the quality culture of the university, in part, as it is often difficult for staff to perceive the relationship between the information gathered and quality improvement. Related to this is the need to ensure that when data are gathered for purposes of quality, this should be purposeful and that respondents should receive information about what changes were made as a result of their input. For example, the team heard that although students gave feedback on a number of issues, they did not hear the outcomes of this. In this instance and in other circumstances the team recommend that the feedback loop should be complete in quality processes.

The team recognise that there is a strong desire for quality culture in the institution. To this extent the team also agree that UMF perceives the need and assumes the goal to develop further its internal quality management system, and to promote an academic culture of quality, which goes beyond that required by state legislation. In the meantime the team recommend that attention is paid to the personal contribution of staff attitudes and approaches in building a quality culture.

These comments should not detract from the excellent work of some groups. The administrative council has been involved in strategic planning and quality management. The IEP self-evaluation group demonstrated how the activity had raised their awareness of institutional quality issues. Furthermore the experience gained in the numerous evaluations that have taken place recently can be beneficial in contributing to the development of a quality culture. Based on these experiences, the quality culture can be improved and strengthened by developing common understandings and ownership/awareness.

The university has programmes, which are taught in English, French and Romanian. These are currently organised as three distinct entities. There are opportunities to improve both the quality of teaching and learning and the internationalisation of the student body through greater integration of these programmes. Additionally, as the majority of students within the French and English taught curricula will leave the country after graduation and function as 'ambassadors' of the institution, sound quality processes especially within these programmes will help to build a quality culture and an international reputation.